

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1 through 12 (Cancelled).

Claim 13. (Currently amended) An apparatus for applying a coating to articles, comprising:

(i) supply means (14) arranged to provide a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid coating material (16), said supply means having a surface along which the solidifiable liquid coating material flows;

(ii) means (10) for effecting relative movement between articles (12) are coated and the supply means (14) whereby in use the articles (12) are coated with solidifiable liquid coating material (16) in the curtain (30); and

(iii) means arranged (20, 22; 40, 46, 48) to subject the solidifiable liquid coating material (16) to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure on the surface whereby to modify the flow characteristics of the curtain (30).

Claims 14 through 16 (Cancelled).

Claim 17. (Currently amended) An apparatus for controlling curtain of a solidifiable liquid composition comprising:

(i) supply means (14) arranged to provide a curtain (30) of solidifiable liquid coating material (16), said supply means having a surface along which the solidifiable liquid coating material flows; and

(ii) means (20, 22; 40, 46, 48) arranged to subject the solidifiable liquid coating material (16) to the action of at least one stream of gas under pressure attached to the surface whereby to modify the characteristics of the curtain (30).

Claim 18. (New) An apparatus for coating articles, comprising:

means for supplying a solidifiable liquid coating material, said supply means having a surface along which the solidifiable liquid coating material flows;

an outlet slot positioned downstream of the supply means through which the solidifiable liquid coating material flows under the action of gravity to form a curtain;

means for effecting relative movement between the articles and the supply means whereby in use the articles are coated with the solidifiable liquid coating material in the curtain; and

means for introducing a first gas stream between the surface and the solidifiable liquid coating material so that flow characteristics of the curtain are modified.

Claim 19. (New) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the articles are articles of food and the solidifiable liquid coating material is an edible coating material.

Claim 20. (New) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the edible coating material is chocolate.

Claim 21. (New) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the supply means includes a trough having opposed surfaces leading towards the slot, and the first gas stream introducing means is arranged to introduce the first gas stream between the solidifiable liquid coating material and each of the opposed surfaces.

Claim 22. (New) The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising means for introducing a second gas stream to the solidifiable liquid coating material after the curtain has been established in order to change a direction of the curtain and/or a physical property of the solidifiable liquid coating material forming the curtain.

Claim 23. (New) The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising a curved surface positioned adjacent a portion of the curtain, wherein the second gas stream introducing means is arranged to cause the second gas stream to flow over the curved surface by virtue of the Coanda effect to induce a change in a direction of travel of the curtain.

Claim 24. (New) The apparatus of claim 22, further comprising a controller for controlling a pressure of the first and/or second gas streams.

Claim 25. (New) The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising a controller for controlling a pressure of the first gas stream.

Claim 26. (New) An apparatus for coating an article, comprising:

a container for a liquid material, said container having an opening configured to form a curtain from said liquid material; and

a first gas layer defined between a first surface of said liquid material and said container in a region proximate said opening.

Claim 27. (New) The apparatus as in claim 26, further comprising a moving device for generating relative movement between the article and said curtain so as to coat the article with said liquid material.

Claim 28. (New) The apparatus as in claim 26, further comprising a temperature controller for controlling a gas temperature of said first gas layer so that said gas temperature is substantially equal to a liquid temperature of said liquid.

Claim 29. (New) The apparatus as in claim 26, further comprising a second gas layer acting on said curtain to induce a change a direction of said curtain and/or a physical property of said liquid material forming said curtain.

Claim 30. (New) The apparatus as in claim 26, further comprising a second gas layer defined between a second surface of said liquid material and said container in said region.

Claim 31. (New) An apparatus for producing a curtain of a liquid material, comprising:

a container for the liquid material, said supply container having a first surface and a slot, said supply container being configured such that the liquid material flows along said first surface and through to define the curtain of the liquid material; and

a first gas stream between the liquid material and the first surface.

Claim 32. (New) The apparatus as in claim 31, further comprising a curved surface adjacent to a portion of said curtain, and a second gas stream flowing over said curved surface for changing a direction of travel of said curtain.